



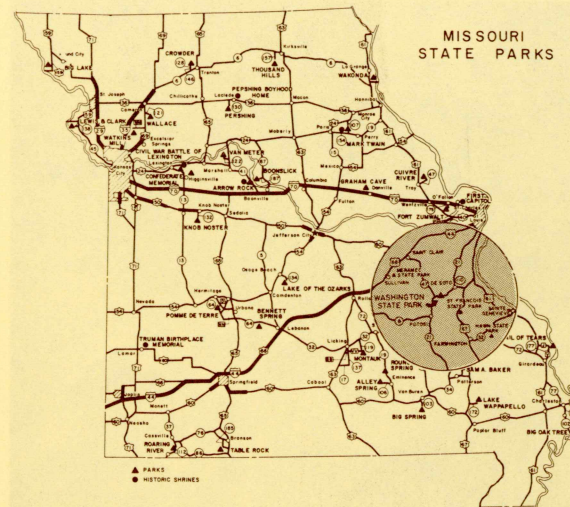
Fig. 5

the symbols associated with this Southern Cult are represented here. They include the maces or batons, bi-lobed arrows, crosses, and sunbursts. Such symbols were probably introduced to Indians in the Missouri highlands by the mound building Middle Mississippian people who had large villages and religious centers at St. Louis, Cahokia, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee and southeastern Missouri. This was just prior to pioneer times.

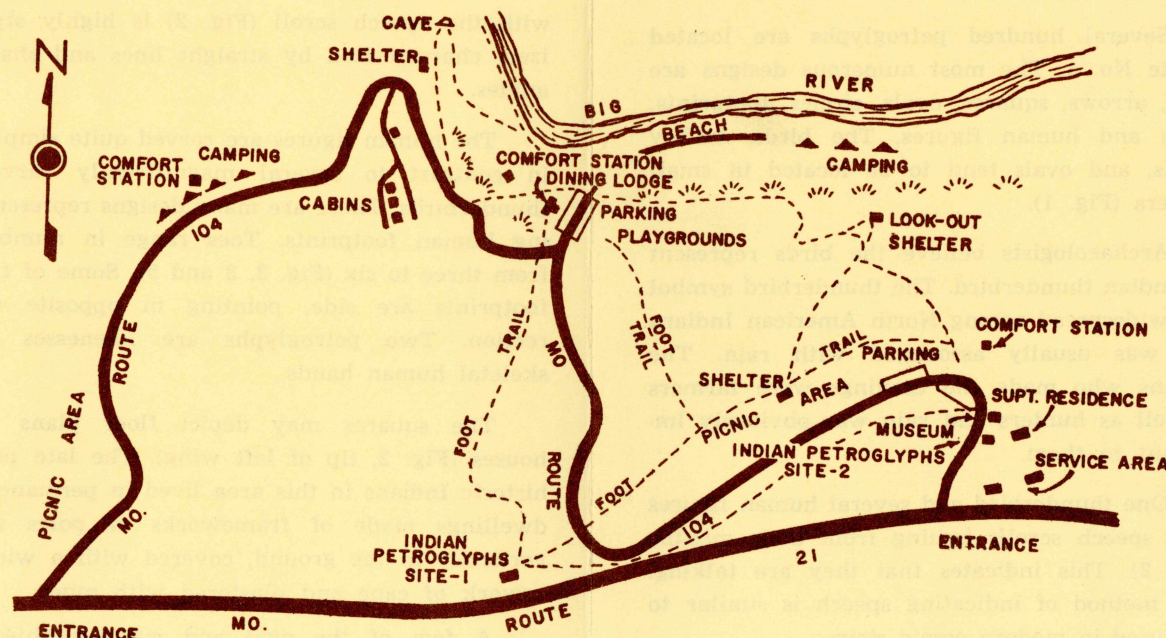
The petroglyphs at Washington State Park do not represent a written language or messages left by one Indian to another. It seems much more likely that they were memory aids (mnemonic devices) to help the Indians successfully enact their ceremonies. Like many other people, the American Indians often had several different societies and organizations within a tribe. In some cases, a man might gain admission through performing some courageous act. The initiation ceremonies were often long and complex, involving memorization of many songs, chants, and dances. Furthermore, a ceremony was probably considered successful only

if it were performed in a letter perfect fashion. Therefore, memory aids were highly desirable. It is possible that each petroglyph was symbolic of what the initiate was to do or say at given points of the ceremony and would act as a general reminder rather than providing the exact words or formulae. The numerous arrows (Fig. 2, 3 and 5, lower right) at the large petroglyph site could have served as directional guides. The ceremony might begin at a certain spot and follow the arrows from one group to another until the ritual was completed.

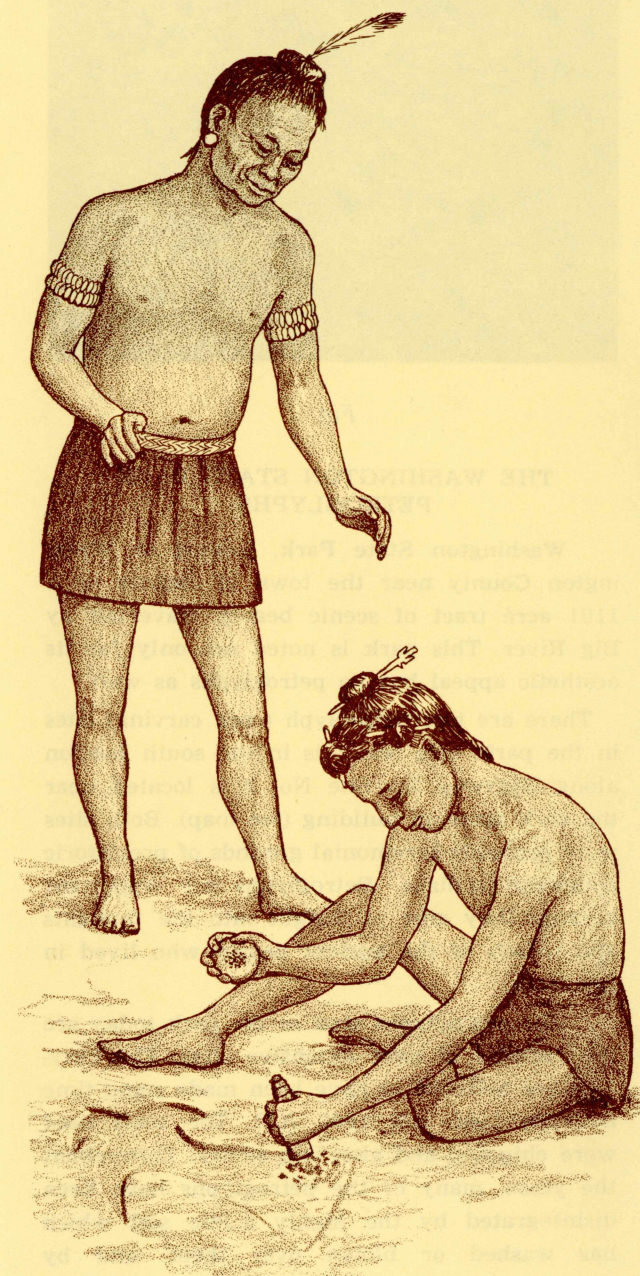
These petroglyphs are artistic efforts that are our heritage from the colorful past of this section of our Nation. They are important to Indians who spent much time and effort in making them. They have been studied, interpreted, and preserved for your knowledge and enjoyment through the cooperation of the University of Missouri and the Missouri State Park Board.



For additional information, write:
MISSOURI STATE PARK BOARD
P. O. Box 176
Jefferson City



WASHINGTON STATE PARK IN MISSOURI FOREMOST INDIAN PETROGLYPH SITE



ON STATE HIGHWAY 21 NEAR DESOTO



Fig. 1

THE WASHINGTON STATE PARK PETROGLYPHS

Washington State Park, located in Washington County near the town of DeSoto, is a 1101 acre tract of scenic beauty traversed by Big River. This park is noted not only for its aesthetic appeal but its petroglyphs as well.

There are two petroglyph (rock carving) sites in the park. Site No. 1 is in the south portion along Highway 21. Site No. 2 is located near the park museum building (see map). Both sites were probably ceremonial grounds of prehistoric American Indians. Petroglyphs are important because they give us insight into the thoughts and beliefs of the ancient people who lived in this area.

The petroglyphs seen in the park today are the remains of once extensive sites. The carvings are believed to have been made some time between 1000 and 1600 A.D. The tools used were chipping and abrading stones. Throughout the years, many of the petroglyphs have been disintegrated by the highly acidic soil which has washed or blown over them, and by



Fig. 2

thoughtless visitors who have walked on them. The Missouri State Park Board has taken precautions to preserve the remaining carvings for the knowledge they provide to scholars and park visitors.

Several hundred petroglyphs are located at site No. 1. The most numerous designs are birds, arrows, squares, ovals, circles, footprints, claws and human figures. The birds, turkey tracks, and ovals tend to be located in small clusters (Fig. 1).

Archaeologists believe the birds represent the Indian thunderbird. The thunderbird symbol was widespread among North American Indians and was usually associated with rain. The Indians who made the carvings were farmers as well as hunters and rain was obviously important to them.

One thunderbird and several human figures have speech scrolls issuing from their mouths (Fig. 2). This indicates that they are talking. This method of indicating speech is similar to that used in modern comic strips.



Fig. 3

Differences in art styles are noted at site No. 1, especially in two of the most prominent thunderbirds. The thunderbird holding the smaller bird in its claw is carved realistically with flowing graceful lines. The thunderbird with the speech scroll (Fig. 2) is highly stylized, characterized by straight lines and sharp angles.

The human figures are carved quite simply, in contrast to several magnificently carved thunderbirds. There are many designs representing human footprints. Toes range in number from three to six (Fig. 2, 3 and 5). Some of the footprints are side, pointing in opposite direction. Two petroglyphs are likenesses of skeletal human hands.

The squares may depict floor plans of houses (Fig. 2, tip of left wing). The late prehistoric Indians in this area lived in permanent dwellings made of frameworks of poles set vertically in the ground, covered with a wickerwork of cane and plastered with mud.

A few of the oval and circular objects



Fig. 4

(Fig. 1, left) are perhaps symbols indicating a vital interest in the fertility of human, animal, and plant life; others with finlike appendages may be pictures of fish. The turkey and animal tracks (Fig. 3) could be involved in some form of hunting magic. There is a carving of a coiled snake with open jaws and a triangular rattle at the end of his tail (Fig. 4). Other interesting designs include a cross (common to many people before the time of Christ) and several maces or batons (Fig. 5) which may have been emblems of authority and prestige.

Site No. 2 near the museum contains nine maces or batons, two examples of a variant of the bi-lobed arrow (Fig. 5, bottom left), a turtle, a pelt, a kneeling or dancing human figure holding a stick or wand (Fig. 5), several birds a turkey, and other animal tracks.

Archaeological evidence indicates that some time before the coming of the white man a new religious cult spread through the Indian tribes in the southeastern part of the United States and up the Mississippi River. Some of